



School students strike over climate this Friday

...and you can join them >>Pages 4&5

Protest in Glasgow against Cop26 climate conference >>Pages 4&5

Capitalism—a system rigged for oil >>Pages 10&11

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STOP ALL DEPORTATIONS



Protesters blocked Whitehall in central London this week to demand an end to deportation flights to Jamaica
PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

'DO NOT SEND ME TO DIE'



Christopher with his partner Margaret. He faces deportation to Jamaica
>>Page 3

IRELAND

Elections show rejection of the establishment

THE MAJOR establishment parties took a kicking in Ireland's general election last Saturday. Sinn Fein won 37 seats and would have taken more if it had stood more candidates.

Left parties also did well, helping spread fear among mainstream politicians.

>>Pages 7 and 14&15

HEALTH

More panics and racism won't stop coronavirus

AS THE World Health Organisation declared that the new strain of the coronavirus poses a "grave threat" to the world, newspaper editors saw their chance.

From the Sun to the Guardian, page after page is devoted to spreading panic.

Many people are now gripped by fear as a result.

There has also been a spike in levels of racism directed at people thought to be Chinese.

>>Pages 6 and 15

DEBATE

After Corbyn defeat, where now for the left?

LEFT WING trade union leader Mark Serwotka and Socialist Worker editor Charlie Kimber discussed how to respond to the election at a meeting in London recently.

Both saw the need to mobilise on the streets and in workplaces to beat the Tories.

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THE THINGS THEY SAY

'A diluted version of Corbyn's tax raids on the rich'

Tory John Redwood claims chancellor Sajid Javid is going to bring in a 'mansion tax' and target the wealthy by slashing tax relief on pension savings

'Don't alienate Middle England'

The Daily Mail newspaper warns the Tories to look after the well off

'Is the Boris bandwagon showing early signs of lurching to the left?'

The Sun's former political editor Trevor Kavanagh sees something that's hidden from the rest of us

'Inviting Communist China's Huawei to install our new 5G network seems a risk too far'

Kavanagh continues

'Doggedly perpetuates failed communist ideology'

A paid-for Facebook advert by far right Turning Point UK on Jeremy Corbyn



Tories underestimate number killed by Universal Credit

THE GOVERNMENT has investigated 69 suicides that could have been linked to problems with benefit claims over the last six years.

But the number of people who have killed themselves due to Tory attacks on benefits is likely to be far higher.

A National Audit Office report last week said the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) doesn't have "a robust record" of cases investigated before 2014-15.

And it said it is "highly unlikely" that the 69 cases "represent the number of cases it could have investigated in the past six years".

The report also found that the DWP is commissioning more "Internal Process Reviews" of suicides. Of the 69 suicide-related IPRs, 21 were completed

between 1 April 2019 and 13 November 2019.

That compares with 13 in the whole of the 2018-19 financial year, and two in the 2017-18 financial year.

Campaigners against Tory attacks on benefits and their hated Universal Credit have demanded a public inquiry. Universal Credit should be scrapped immediately.

MINISTERS HAVE been accused of blowing more than £112,000 on a "propaganda" website about school funding.

The new site is to compete with SchoolCuts, which is run by teaching unions.

The government's website ignores the impact of inflation, increases in staff pay and other costs.

Schools minister Nick Gibb

SOME 100 people attended a vigil for Errol Graham in Nottingham last week.

Speakers at the vigil included the leader of Nottingham City Council, David Mellen, and Errol Graham's ex-partner, Diana Burton.

He had suffered serious mental health problems,

failed to make a Universal Credit meeting and had his benefit stopped. He starved to death.

Errol Graham was 55 when his "emaciated" body was found in June 2018 by bailiffs who had arrived to evict him.

The grandfather weighed just four-and-a-half stone when he died, an inquest heard in June last year.

THERE ARE 376 NHS bosses earning at least £150,000. They include hospital trust chief executives and NHS England bosses. That's £56 million plus not spent on nurses. In which case the health service could have 2,100 more of them.

New Statesman loves Tony Blair

THE New Statesman magazine's refusal to endorse Labour under Jeremy Corbyn in December's general election provoked anger from people who presumably never read the magazine and thought it was left wing.

But to prove the point there was last week's interview with former Labour leader Tony Blair.

He was questioned about skills and apprenticeships for a special supplement sponsored by socialists such as Amazon, privatised energy company EDF and pharma giant AstraZeneca.

The interview was conducted by "Special Projects Editor" Alona Ferber. She joined the magazine in October last year. Ferber had done three years as a managing editor at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. She spent another year working for the Tony Blair Faith Foundation.

The mayor of London Sadiq Khan

Sadiq Khan against taxes on Google

LONDON Labour mayor Sadiq Khan headed to Google's swanky HQ in King's Cross last month to launch yet another counter-extremism fund.

The £400,000 of public money he took with him was matched by the tech company.

The donation pales next to the tax avoided by the company on its British sales

Research group TaxWatch puts the figure at around £300 million a year—750 times Google's gift.

Entirely coincidentally just two weeks later the mayor did an interview with City AM newspaper where he lobbied against a digital services tax due to come in from April.

Khan argued "I think we've got to realise that we're a global city, we work in a global economy."

"To unilaterally impose taxes in one country could have unintended consequences, making them move elsewhere."

Grenfell companies may avoid prosecution

THE GRENFELL Inquiry chairman has asked the attorney general for guarantees that oral evidence given by corporate witnesses will not be used to pursue criminal charges against them.

Sir Martin Moore-Bick has written to Geoffrey Cox QC demanding a pledge that evidence given in person by firms involved in the refurbishment of the 24-storey block will be covered by immunity from prosecution.

It followed an hour application from building contractors who carried out work on the tower the year before 72 people died in the inferno.

Sir Martin Moore-Bick They had threatened to stay silent by claiming the legal right of privilege against self-incrimination.

It has been used in other public inquiries, including the Bloody Sunday Inquiry and the Baha Mousa Inquiry among others.

This was used to protect British soldiers.

Harry and Meghan join Blair and the bankers

PRINCE HARRY and Meghan Markle have given us a taste of their non-royal future by speaking at an elite JP Morgan investment summit in Florida.

But it seems they weren't the only public servants turning up at the highly-paid event.

Attending the same summit was Tony Blair and he narrowly avoided sharing a stage with the royal couple.

It's understood the former Prime Minister, who was appointed as a £2 million a year advisor to the banking giant in 2008, took part in a morning event. Later that evening

Meghan and Harry Prince Harry spoke. Speakers at the investment summit are paid up to £775,000. In their first public appearance Meghan described her love for her husband before introducing him to a crowd filled with billionaires and ex-politicians.

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Fresh deportations show up cruelty of Tory racism

by TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

"I'M GOING to die if I go back—the same people who killed my father will kill me," Christopher, a man threatened with imminent deportation, told Socialist Worker.

"I have no relatives, no nothing in Jamaica."

Christopher was being held in the Harmondsworth immigration centre. He said he faces "death and nothing else" if the Tories deport him.

The Tory government pushed ahead with the deportation of around 20 people to Jamaica on Tuesday morning.

The Court of Appeal had partially blocked the deportation of people held in detention centres on Monday night.

But the Home Office might have deported some people protected by the court order anyway—and the threat still hangs over everyone's head.

It was unconfirmed whether Christopher was deported, despite the court order, as Socialist Worker went to press.

Margaret, Christopher's partner, says that even if he was saved he could still be "taken away at any minute". "What I want is Chris coming through the door and saying he is home," she said.

"But what if he comes home and they try to put us through it again two years down the line?"

Functioning

Judges said the Home Office could not remove anyone "unless satisfied (they) had access to a functioning, non-O2 Sim card on or before February 3".

The Detention Action charity argued that some detainees did not have access to legal advice because of problems with an O2 mast in the area.



ANGER AT rotten deportations takes to the streets

PICTURES: GUY SMALLMAN

The Home Office lost an appeal at 1am on Tuesday. But authorities had bussed detainees to Doncaster Sheffield Airport—including those covered by the order.

Some detainees were taken off the plane at the last minute.

On Tuesday morning Detention Action said that some, possibly all, of the individuals may have been ultimately removed from the flight.

Christopher came to Britain on 6 April 2001 and was picked up by the authorities two months later.

He then put in a claim for asylum seeker status.

As someone applying for asylum, Christopher's life was in limbo. "I

couldn't do anything," he said. "I couldn't work, I couldn't even open a bank account. All I could do is go to Croydon immigration to sign in with the Home Office."

Christopher stopped going to sign in with the Home Office because of his deteriorating health.

He was taken to the detention centre twice in that time.

At least five people have been murdered following deportation to Jamaica.

Christopher says he was the victim of abuse and torture when he was a child and teenager in Jamaica.

"I witnessed my father killed—shot dead—at the age of seven," he

explained. "The gang tried to kill me and shot me too."

The Tories have made clear that they will push ahead with mass deportations—and must be met with resistance.

Hundreds of people blocked Whitehall and the road outside parliament on Monday night, chanting, "No more charter flights—we want human rights."

It was the second night of protest that brought the government district to a standstill after hundreds took to the streets last Thursday.

Anti-racists must fight to stop all deportations and tear down Britain's racist immigration system.

Anti-racist workplace conference

UP TO 250 trade unionists and campaigners rallied against racism in central London last Saturday.

The Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) trade union conference brought together people from across Britain.

At the opening plenary speakers talked about how activists could take on racism at work.

Leila, a member of the Usdaw union, spoke about how she had used a Show Racism the Red Card Wear Red To Work Day to organise against racism from "managers, the public and colleagues".

"One white worker said they didn't want anything to do with it because, 'You can't say anything anymore,'" she said.

"Another group of workers who are white took her to task."

Leila said it helped to "identify anti-racists, create black and white unity and gained union members" and allowed them to win against the bosses over a rota system.

Wilf Sullivan from the TUC union federation argued activists had to link the fights against racism and inequality. "We see the racists as bigots and ignorant," he said. "What we don't talk about is the suited, rich people who use racism."

"They're not necessarily



Wilf Sullivan

bigots or white supremacists, but they use racism as part of their strategy to pursue a right wing political agenda."

Discussions at workshops included how to build solidarity with refugees, decolonising education, resisting racist ID checks in the NHS and fighting the far right.

The closing plenary focused on how to organise for mass demos in March.

Meanwhile, up to 300 people joined a protest against racist stickers in Ipswich, Suffolk, last Saturday.

It was organised by the Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality and

SOCIALISMS

AUSTRALIA'S POLITICAL FIRESTORM
Camilla Royle and Caitlin Doyle

Plus
Eliza Gearty on Alasdair Gray
John Newsinger on George Orwell
Terry Sullivan and Donny Gluckstein on Hegel and revolution

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Begum loses legal appeal

SHAMIMA BEGUM has lost the first stage of her appeal against the Tories stripping her of British citizenship.

Shamima Begum, Amira Abase and Kadiza Sultana were school students when they left Tower Hamlets, east London, in 2015. They then joined the reactionary group Isis. The Tories stripped her of British citizenship in February 2019.

The Special Immigration Appeals Commission rejected her appeal that she had been left stateless because her family are of Bangladeshi

origin. Without the West's wars in the Middle East, there would have been no Isis for Shamima Begum to join.

Some liberals accept a dangerous division between "good" and "bad Muslims".

The British state sees any Muslim that questions British foreign policy as prone to "extremism".

This division strengthens state-sponsored Islamophobia.

Shamima Begum should have her citizenship reinstated and be returned home.

Shamima Begum

Protest can turn climate chaos into Tory chaos for Johnson

by SARAH BATES

JOIN THE SCHOOL CLIMATE STRIKES

Friday 14 February
Friday 13 March

Take action in schools, colleges and workplaces

To find details of a strike near you see ukscn.org/events



BORIS JOHNSON has lurched into the chaos of cobbling together a team and strategy for hosting the United Nations (UN) Cop26 talks in Glasgow.

Johnson held a disastrous launch last week, where he failed to announce plans to cut carbon emissions or organise a strategy for Cop in November.

And since he suddenly sacked Claire O'Neill as Cop26 president, Johnson has had trouble filling the post. Former Tory leaders David Cameron and William Hague have both rejected the offer of the position.

But that's not Johnson's only fire to fight. Whitehall and the Scottish government are locked in an "extraordinary state of standoff," according to O'Neill.

A key point of contention is whether the Glasgow Science Centre will be used by the Scottish government teams or as an official Cop26 venue.

And the two administrations are battling over who will foot the estimated £200 million policing bill for the event.

Megan Rose from Scottish Youth Climate Strike told Socialist Worker, "Cop26 is a burden and an opportunity but I wouldn't want it to happen anywhere else."

"Cop25 didn't deliver anything anyone was looking for, so there's a lot of pressure."

Hanging

"The Cop26 outcomes are hanging on what the British government does, but it's quite behind—it doesn't even have a president."

School climate strikes set for Friday of this week mark a year since school and college students first walked out to demand urgent action.

It's been 12 months of inspiring activism that has reinvigorated the climate justice movement on the streets.

Megan said strikes are planned in March, April and May—with action planned as far as September.

What's your story?

Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk



PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Activists make BP sponsorship British Museum's Achilles' heel

ACTIVISTS OCCUPIED the British Museum with a 13-foot Trojan horse over three days last week.

The action was called by the BP or not BP campaign group.

During the 51-hour occupation, activists held a number of different actions to call on the museum to cut ties with BP.

The multinational oil and gas company sponsors the museum's Troy—Myth and Reality exhibition.

Learning

Victor, one of the organisers of the protest, told Socialist Worker, "The British Museum is an institute of learning.

"Climate complicity and harassing indigenous people has no place here."

Despite the climate crisis BP plans to spend £56 billion over the next ten years drilling for even more oil and gas.

Protest organisers said their Trojan horse symbolised BP's

attempts to use art and culture sponsorship to mask its climate crimes.

BP has signed a number of sponsorship deals with cultural institutions including The National Portrait Gallery and The Royal Opera House.

But its attempts to present itself as an ethical company will not erase its bloody history.

Protests have already forced The Royal Shakespeare Company to end its partnership with BP.

Collaborating

In West Papua BP is collaborating with the Indonesian military.

It is complicit in the murder and torture of activists in order to secure gas reserves found in the region.

Raki Ap, an activist originally from West Papua, told Socialist Worker, "The rights of indigenous people to self-determination go hand in hand with the climate movement.

"We have to work together to stop corporate interests destroying our planet."

Ann, a divestment activist from Lewes in Sussex, said, "We need to make BP socially unacceptable."

Solidarity with indigenous people was also part the protest.

Campaigners from Senegal and West Papua—a region of New Guinea, north of Australia—spoke of the crimes BP had committed in their countries.



The mane attraction—activists' Trojan horse

Sophie Squire

Extinction Rebellion demo could be crucial next step

Extinction Rebellion (XR) is organising a national demonstration through the streets of London on Saturday of next week.

XR has called on people to take to the streets against police clampdowns, attempts to label activists as extremists, government failures and devastating climate catastrophe.

The march has the potential to be massive, with a real, radical edge.

Standstill

A "grief march" last October brought central London to a standstill as at least 30,000 rebels wound their way from Hyde Park to Russell Square.

And the protest—organised at short notice with little publicity—far outstripped the numbers on the streets during the rest of the October Rebellion

fortnight of action. It's a hugely welcome development that XR is looking for ways to show its collective strength.

Smaller scale direct action stunts play an important role in training activists, causing disruption and building awareness about the climate emergency.

But large scale protests are vitally important in building the kind of mass movement needed to take on climate deniers and deniers at the top of society.

Actions of ordinary people have an impact. It was only after the hugely successful April rebellion that parliament declared a climate emergency.

But we have to push further—and that means more people taking to the streets.

"When parliament declared a climate and environment emergency, the

very same day the government agreed to the Heathrow airport expansion," said rebel Sam.

"The only thing that will halt this emergency is every person coming together and demanding systemic change. Together we are strong."

Disobedience

XR's method of organising civil disobedience has convinced huge numbers of ordinary people into being "rebels for life".

We need more strikes, protests and occupations demanding climate justice.

And this month's climate strike and XR mobilisation is the best place to start.

Join the XR demo, Sat 22 February, 1pm in Central London. For updates go to **Enough Is Enough: Together We March** on Facebook

Tories choo-choose HS2

HS2 IS going ahead—at least for now.

The government announced this week that plans to construct the bloated high speed railway were still on track.

Chancellor Sajid Javid said it had "weighed up the pros and cons" of the project, which is expected to cost at least £100 billion.

He called for "better connectivity between the great cities of the north".

HS2 is due to run from London to Birmingham, from where two branches will go to Leeds and Manchester. It is projected for completion by 2040.

But it is already years delayed and the estimated cost is over double the initial sum. To defer attention from high speed railway chaos the

government also announced £5 billion investment on new buses and cycling routes.

But that's far less than is needed, and the real issue is to take them back into public ownership.

HS2 is hugely environmentally destructive and will pour money into private firms—it should be scrapped entirely.

Left at mercy of the storm

"STORM OF the century" Ciara battered Britain last weekend, causing devastating floods and gales of up to 97 miles per hour.

Around half a million homes suffered flooding and electricity cuts, with 20,000 households spending Sunday night without power.

A month and a half of rainfall fell in 24 hours in some areas, and hundreds of flood warnings were in place.

Many areas hit were still recovering from previous floods. The authorities have failed to act to protect against future flooding. People were bracing for blizzards and dangerous levels of snow and ice as Socialist Worker went to press.



PICTURE: NEIL TERRY

Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

BUILD THE RESISTANCE TO TORIES' RANCID RACISM

ANTI-racists and socialists have repeatedly said that Boris Johnson will use racism in order to shore up his rule and divide opposition. His 81-seat majority in parliament makes it easier for the Tories to force through more attacks.

This week confirmed that in the most revolting way.

The Tories rammed through deportations to Jamaica despite intense campaigning, public pressure and court challenges.

The move was a calculated act of racist cruelty, designed by Johnson and home secretary Priti Patel to show off their "hard" credentials.

It was an act of malicious political theatre. And the aim is to send the message that the new government will ignore the judges and trample on people's rights to implement racist measures.

It was the same when Tory MPs were told to vote down a proposal to allow a tiny number of unaccompanied child refugees to join their families in Britain.

These desperate children were used as props to bolster Johnson. This rancid rhetoric is one of

the foundations of the Tory party, which reaches for racism when thinks it's useful.

In 1978, as she approached a general election, Margaret Thatcher said that four million migrants were coming from "the new Commonwealth or Pakistan". She added, "Now, that is an awful lot and I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture."

Such words encouraged every racist and fascist.

In 2014, then-defence secretary Michael Fallon said British towns were "under siege [with] large numbers of migrant workers and

Deportations are a calculated act of racist cruelty designed to divide us

people claiming benefits". Theresa May later initiated the racist "go home" vans encouraging people to "self-deport".

The well-worn strategy is to turn people against false enemies to deflect attention from their real ones—the rich and the politicians who support them.

The Tories on Monday pointed out in parliament that the law they were using to deport people was passed under Tony Blair's government in 2007.

That is to Labour's shame.

But it's possible to resist the racism that Johnson is unleashing.

This week showed that people are prepared to take to the streets against deportations and racism (see page 3).

Some in Labour will compromise or concede to the Tories. Instead, we need to fight to stop every deportation, every racist piece of legislation and every attempt to divide us.

Stand Up To Racism demonstrations on 21 March in London and Glasgow must be a defiant show of force against Johnson's racist grandstanding.

We should use every mobilisation to strengthen the fightback against the Tories.

HEART UNIONS Week—the TUC union federation's annual publicity campaign—this year focuses on challenging sexual harassment at work.

This reflects how the #MeToo movement has pushed challenging systemic sexism to the top of the agenda.

Heart Unions Week also has the usual goals of ending low pay, scrapping anti-union laws and increasing union membership.

All that together is laudably ambitious—and winnable if there's

a proper fight. So what's the TUC's plan?

Well, fighting sexual harassment means asking the Tories for a "legal duty requiring employers to take all reasonable steps to protect workers".

Rebuilding union membership and fighting problems at work can be done with a street stall and a photo for social media.

If you want, you can "ramp up action in your workplace" with a lunchtime meeting.

And that means a return to strikes on a much bigger scale.

Stand Up To Racism

Turning The Tide Against Racism—Scotland conference. Sat 22 Feb, Glasgow

**March against racism
Sat 21 March, London and Glasgow**



standuptoracism.org.uk

ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS

Israel supporters are on a new offensive

THE WITCHHUNT smearing anti-Zionists as antisemites has moved on to new targets.

The Jewish Chronicle complained last week that the anti-racist charity Show Racism the Red Card had chosen the film-maker Ken Loach and the poet Michael Rosen as judges in their annual competition for young people.

This prompted an outpouring of bile from the likes of TV presenter Rachel Riley, who ranted about “deniers/proponents of anti-Jewish racism”.

Accusing Michael Rosen of Holocaust denial is beyond surreal. Anyone familiar with his vast output knows that one theme is his Jewish identity, which he takes pride in.

His latest book is *The Missing*, and is about his efforts to trace the histories of relatives who were murdered by the Nazis during the Second World War.

The attack on him is reminiscent of the Blairite leader of the National Union of Students who back in the 1990s called Tony Cliff, the founder of the Socialist Workers Party, a Holocaust revisionist.

She recanted when Cliff’s partner, Chanie Rosenberg, like him Jewish, wrote to her listing the members of their families who died in the Holocaust.

Ken Loach isn’t Jewish. But he’s a socialist, internationalist, and anti-racist. He’s singled out because, like both Michael and Jeremy Corbyn, he supports the struggle of the Palestinian people against their expropriation and oppression by the state of Israel.

It’s unlikely that the likes of Riley can be shamed into recanting. She’s already used the Holocaust denial slur against Noam Chomsky, another anti-Zionist Jew, who has suffered antisemitism. And this isn’t just about the self-feeding nature of social media campaigns.

Brand

Supporters of Israel won a major victory with Labour’s defeat in the December general election. The campaign to brand Corbyn, the first anti-Zionist to become leader of the Labour Party, as an antisemite helped to undermine his image.

We can see the same kind of slurs being rolled out in the United States against Bernie Sanders’ left wing campaign to become the Democratic Party’s presidential candidate.

Sanders’ criticisms of Israel are in fact much milder than Corbyn’s but, if he continues to win support, the accusations of antisemitism will reach a higher pitch.

The attacks on Loach and Rosen represent an attempt to drive anti-Zionists out of the anti-racist movement.

It’s interesting how the antisemitism campaigners against Corbyn have tended to talk about “anti-Jewish racism”.

This is, of course, the ultimate height of absurdity.

Corbyn, Loach and Rosen all have excellent records of fighting all forms of racism, including antisemitism.

The Jewish Board of Deputies and other such pro-Israel organisations have long had to struggle with the embarrassing fact that the most effective campaigners against the far right—who remain the main proponents of antisemitism—have tended to be anti-Zionists often working together with Zionists.

But just because something is ridiculous doesn’t mean it can’t get mass support in favourable circumstances.

And unfortunately present circumstances are favourable for the peddlers of the lie that antisemitism is the same as anti-Zionism. Corbyn’s defeat gave them a big scalp. They want more.

If they succeeded in driving out the left, the anti-racist movement would collapse. The movement is the product of decades of struggle by black people and anti-racists and anti-fascists of all colours and backgrounds.

The other day I saw its spirit embodied on a London bus when a young black woman challenged a drunk who was pestering an orthodox Jewish man.

It’s vital the witch-hunters are defeated. This requires a vigorous campaign to defend Loach and Rosen—and one that is not apologetic and defensive like the Labour Party response to the slurs against Corbyn.

There’s no shame in supporting the Palestinian struggle.

Panic measures and racism are no cure for coronavirus

A mixture of apocalyptic and racist headlines in Britain makes a rational response to the virus less likely

THE coronavirus outbreak poses a “very grave threat for the rest of the world”.

That was the message from the head of the World Health Organisation (WHO) this week as he appealed for sharing virus samples and speeding up research into vaccines.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO director-general, was addressing a meeting aimed at accelerating development of drugs, diagnostics and vaccines against the flu-like virus.

By Tuesday morning China had reported 42,708 confirmed coronavirus cases, including 1,017 deaths.

Ghebreyesus said, “With 99 percent of cases in China, this remains very much an emergency for that country, but one that holds a very grave threat for the rest of the world.”

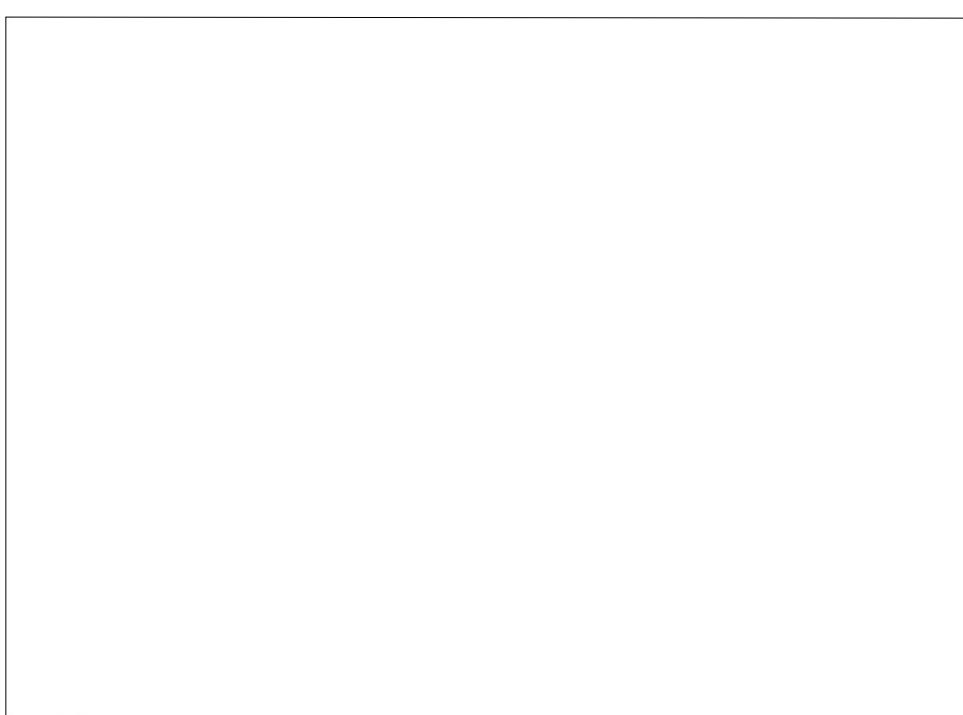
Abuse

Five British nationals were diagnosed with the coronavirus in France, after staying in the same ski chalet with a person who had been in Singapore.

The number of diagnosed people with the virus in Britain itself had reached eight by Monday.

“The detection of this small number of cases could be the spark that becomes a bigger fire,” said Ghebreyesus.

“But for now it’s only a spark. Our objective remains



A PROTEST against racism to East Asian people in Australia
(above) WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (left)

Jinping called for “more decisive” measures to tackle the outbreak in a rare visit to a frontline hospital.

Xi has largely kept out of the public eye since the virus outbreak spiralled across the country from Hubei province.

The outbreak has prompted action by the Chinese government, including locking down entire cities in Hubei as well as cutting transport links nationwide.

On Monday, some 103 people died in Hubei province alone, a daily record.

The national death toll stood at 1,016 at the start of the week.

But the number of new infections nationally was

down almost 20 percent from the day before, from 3,062 to 2,478.

In Britain the swirl of somewhat apocalyptic headlines mixed with racism makes a rational response (see page 15) less likely.

There have already been false reports of the virus in some British towns.

Shouty headlines about a “super spreader”—a British person who recovered from the illness early this week—do little to help.

The man, Steve Walsh, made a point of thanking the NHS staff who had cared for him.

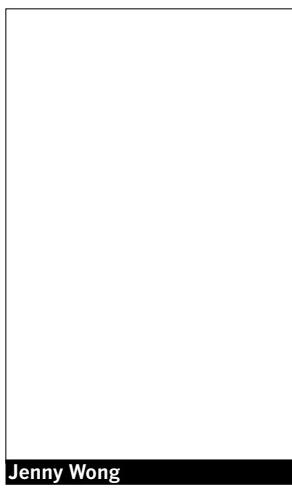
Repeated health cuts here can only harm the process of tackling the outbreak.

Bigoted attacks rise after outbreak

RACIST ATTACKS on people thought to be Chinese have increased since the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Two south-east Asian pupils at the Brooke House college in Market Harborough had eggs thrown at them. The two pupils were in the main market square when two people hurled abuse and threw eggs at them.

Leicestershire Police said it was investigating the attack as aggravated assault. Jenny Wong, the director of the Manchester



Chinese centre, said that she has seen a sharp rise in complaints of racist incidents.

She said attacks were mostly directed at children in schools.

Students in York, Sheffield and at Goldsmiths College in south London have reported incidents of verbal abuse. A Chinese student at the University of Newcastle was reportedly spat at in the streets.

Anti-racists and socialists must organise against these attacks.

FIGURE IT OUT

8 cases of the coronavirus had been confirmed in Britain by Monday of this week

1 death outside China, where the virus originated, had been recorded

26 countries have recorded cases of the coronavirus so far

Irish voters deal a blow to parties of the bosses

Sinn Fein's electoral breakthrough reflects anger at the establishment, says Simon Basketter

THE MAJOR establishment parties took a kicking in the Irish general election last Saturday.

It follows a long term trend for progressive change in Ireland.

Sinn Fein won 37 seats. This is remarkable as the party stood only 42 candidates.

If it had run more candidates Sinn Fein would have made an even bigger breakthrough. It got the most first preference votes with 24.5 percent.

At least half a dozen candidates received far more votes than they needed to be elected under the proportional representation system.

The bosses' parties of Fine Gael and Fianna Fail, which have alternated running the Irish state, are in trouble.

Outgoing Irish taoiseach (prime minister) Leo Varadkar of Fine Gael, and the Fianna Fail leader, both received lower votes in their constituencies than Sinn Fein.

Varadkar was the first outgoing taoiseach not to top the poll in his constituency. He had hoped the mess the British government had made of Brexit would make him appear statesman-like.

But an Irish Times newspaper exit poll showed voters cared more about health and housing.

After being the natural party of government for most of the history of the Irish state, Fianna Fail was decimated in 2011 for implementing European Union austerity.

Crisis

Fine Gael has spent the past nine years presiding over a deepening housing crisis.

In 2007 before the economic crash, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael between them took 69 percent of the vote. Now they are down to around 44 percent.

In the exit poll Sinn Fein came first except with over-65 year olds. Fianna Fail and Fine Gael only got about 15 percent each from those aged between 18 and 34.

Solidarity-People Before Profit scores 7 percent in this age group.

BACK STORY

The right suffered a major upset in the Irish general election

- Sinn Fein benefited from anger at the establishment parties to score an historic breakthrough
- It won the most first preference votes and would have won more seats if it stood more candidates
- The bosses' parties, Fine Gael and Fianna Fail, are fighting for a declining share of the vote
- Movements for change over abortion rights and equal marriage lay behind the shift

Socialists held their ground in a number of seats (see right). The Labour Party did badly, punished for previous coalition deals. The Green Party was more easily forgiven for its role in earlier governments.

Importantly a rag bag of right wingers with a mix of anti-abortion and anti-immigrant bigotry generally did appallingly.

Sinn Fein leader Mary Lou McDonald said it would be undemocratic to exclude Sinn Fein from government formation efforts.

It wants to join the establishment but is under pressure from its working class supporters not to.

Previously both Fine Gael and Fianna Fail have said they wouldn't go into coalition with Sinn Fein. A number of outcomes are possible.

These include a left wing coalition led by Sinn Fein, a grand coalition of the right, or one party getting a "confidence and supply agreement" to tick along.

Another election soon is probably the most likely outcome.

What is clear is that, after the movements that brought marriage equality and abortion rights, Ireland is changing faster than the establishment can deal with.

On other pages...

The two faces of Sinn Fein

>>Pages 14&15



SINN FEIN leader Mary Lou McDonald (centre) celebrates with party members on Sunday

PICTURE: PA

Socialists pledge a return to 'people power politics' after election success

CANDIDATES FROM the Solidarity-People Before Profit group won five seats. Brid Smith was re-elected in Dublin South Central on the second count after winning some 9,547 votes.

Richard Boyd Barrett also won a seat for People before Profit as he topped the poll for first preferences in Dun Laoghaire.

Richard said after his election, "I think it has been a very important election."

"The tectonic plates are shifting away from the two big parties."

"There's a real appetite for progressive change and I'm confident that our vote this time is part of a rising tide for the left."

Alternative

"I think it really resonated that there was a possibility to break the cycle of Fianna Fail and to have a left alternative and that has gone to Sinn Fein, to us, to other forces on the left and the important thing is to keep that momentum."

Gino Kenny of People Before Profit retained his seat.

Gino said after he was elected, "I think we have crossed the political rubicon in Ireland and there is a huge shift to the left."



Richard Boyd Barrett (centre) with other left activists during the election campaign

Paul Murphy of the Rise group, which is part of Solidarity-People Before Profit, and Mick Barry from Solidarity both won their seats.

Conor Reddy of People Before Profit just missed out on a seat.

And Ruth Coppinger for Solidarity lost her seat.

In a statement People Before Profit said, "We are witnessing a political earthquake. The future for the right is bleak."

"Anger at the ballot box is

important—but to carry it through we need mobilisation.

"We need a big protest movement on housing, health and pension age. Let's start with a real fight to get the pension age to 65."

"The future augurs very well for the left. But we will stick to our promise—not an inch to Fianna Fail and Fine Gael."

"We will be returning to 'people power' politics to resist any attacks on working people."

New action dates called for French pension war

The fight isn't over, but the unions need to call for coordinated resistance, says Charlie Kimber

FRENCH BOSSES and the government of president Emmanuel Macron are stepping up attempts to break strikers' resistance to their pension attacks.

They hope to fend off the great revolt that has seen millions on strike repeatedly and on the streets during the last ten weeks.

A group of strikers at the incinerators and waste disposal centres in the Paris region and Marseille have been "requisitioned"—ordered to return to work or face six months imprisonment and a big fine.

Their action had seen rubbish piling up in the streets.

A handful of workers have not returned but, lacking sufficient backing from the union leaders, most felt they had to give in.

One union rep said, "The life expectancy of a garbage collector is seven years lower than the national average. If the pension changes go through we will have no retirement, just work in horrible conditions and then die."

Employers are also moving against individual militants in the RATP Paris public transport system, on the railways and in universities. It's urgent that the strikes are raised to new levels in response.

There are some good signs. Nuclear electricity generating workers are continuing their actions that lead to power cuts.

Outcry

The government has tried to create an outcry against the power cuts. But its MPs last week voted against a proposed law to prevent them.

Gilles Reynaud, president of the association of nuclear subcontractors, said, "Around 80 percent of nuclear activities are subcontracted.

"As the government pushes for low-cost nuclear power, we serve as guinea pigs. But we are neither boss flesh, nor radiation flesh. We are going to fight."

Students and youth groups organised a day of resistance against the government's attacks

BACK STORY

Emmanuel Macron's attack has inspired widespread resistance

- Workers have been striking since September
- Macron wanted to axe 42 different pension schemes and implement a universal one
- This would see workers work longer for a smaller pension
- Mass strikes and protests have meant the government backed off from raising the retirement age
- Workers should resist Macron's attempts to break their strikes

on education and workers' rights on Tuesday this week. Thirteen hospital workers' organisations have organised a day of strikes and demonstrations on Friday this week. They want "real negotiations" over the crisis of funding and staffing in hospitals and social care establishments.

The CGT trade union federation called a day of action for Thursday this week. It said this will be part of preparing for a national day of strikes and demonstrations on Thursday 20 February.

This has been backed by eight union federations and student organisations.

All of these initiatives are hugely positive. They show the fight is not finished.

"The fight is over pensions but it has become about a lot more for many of us," hospital striker Annette told Socialist Worker.

"We have learnt a lot over the last few months about how we have to struggle against the whole system."

The danger is that the days of mobilisation become symbolic rather than being a genuine strategy to force the government into complete retreat.

On other pages...

The system that's rigged for oil
>>Pages 10&11



WORKERS IN France are keeping up the pressure and taking to the streets

PICTURE: O PHIL DES CONTRASTES

Protests in Germany beat back right

MASS PRESSURE from below has blocked the further entry of the far right AfD party into German mainstream politics.

Widespread protests followed a recent election for first minister in the east German state of Thuringia.

A liberal, Thomas Kemmerich, was elected with the votes of the conservative CDU and the AfD.

It was the first time in Germany's post-war history that a state first minister had been elected into office with the votes of the extreme right.

Kemmerich was pictured shaking hands with the fascist AfD regional leader Björn Höcke after being sworn in. In Germany this was seen as rekindling

the handshake between Adolf Hitler and conservative Paul von Hindenburg as Hitler became chancellor in 1933.

Thousands of people took to the streets in Thuringia's cities—Erfurt, Weimar, Jena and Gera.

Facing a storm, Kemmerich resigned after one day.

The exclusion of the far right, breached by the traditional right, was re-imposed from below. But the danger has not passed.

German socialist group Marx21 said, "As a result of enormous pressure, Kemmerich announced his resignation.

"But that's no reason to sound the all-clear. The right wing wants a pact with the AfD and is anything but beaten."



Thomas Kemmerich

US candidates show colours

FIGURE IT OUT

2 hundred billion—the amount that Michael Bloomberg, candidate for the Democrat nomination for US president, said he's going to spend on his campaign

18 dollars is the average donation to the Bernie Sanders campaign

11 candidates are left, down from 25 people in the beginning of the year

THE Democratic Party establishment in the United States is scrabbling to regain control of who will be its candidate for president.

Voting was taking place in the New Hampshire primary as Socialist Worker went to press.

The party's leaders hoped former vice president Joe Biden, a thoroughly corporate

and neoliberal figure, would come out on top. But Biden came fourth in the first primary in Iowa.

In contrast Bernie Sanders, who describes himself a democratic socialist, won the most votes.

Second place in Iowa went to Pete Buttigieg—his policies are pro-business and he was an officer in naval intelligence in

Afghanistan.

The Democrat establishment has another option—billionaire Michael Bloomberg.

The support for Sanders is a sign of the widespread disenchantment with corporate and elite politics. This mood needs to be turned into action—not lined up behind the Democrats.



Brexit is a step back

SOPHIE SQUIRE and Sarah Bates drastically underplay Brexit's threat to workers' living standards and jobs (Socialist Worker, 29 January).

Most Labour members and trade unionists voted Remain. The SWP has been out of step with the advanced sections of the working class.

The European Union (EU) isn't "firmly on the side of the bosses".

Sophie and Sarah refer to the "EU Working Time Directive which limits workers' hours and protects annual leave allowance".

The EU does not oppose all renationalisation.

A Labour government could renationalise the railways so long as rail firms didn't form a single state monopoly. The overwhelming majority of Europe's railways remain state-owned.

The Leave vote was certainly a reaction against austerity. But it was largely nationalist and therefore not progressive.

Fascist movements in their early stage are also anti-establishment. I'm not suggesting Leave voters are in any way fascist, but the Leave vote encouraged the far right across Europe.

There is much wrong with the EU. But far more effective would be to remain and for the British working class movement to fight it from within, linking up with the European Trade Union Confederation.

Lexit promotes an isolated socialist Britain. This is dangerously close to the Stalinist model of socialism in one country.

Sabby Sagall
Central London



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Just a thought...

Don't fall for Amazon lies

THE ADVERT on TV about happy contented workers at Amazon—I wonder how much they paid them?

What a load of propaganda! The reality is appalling conditions and workers being taken away in ambulances, and no union recognition.

Along with using tax loopholes to avoid paying proper taxes.

They are liars.

Rob Murray
South Tyneside

Downplaying mental abuse?

YURI PRASAD is way off mark when he counterposes what the FBI did to Jean Seberg to what the FBI did to Black Power activists (Socialist Worker, 22 January).

In the case of Seberg, the FBI relied on bugging and lies instead of physical repression.

As Yuri notes such tactics worked.

Seberg suffered a miscarriage and made several suicide attempts.

John Curtis
Ipswich

Scrap the TV licence fee

THE COST of the annual television licence fee will increase from 1 April.

It is a modern-day Poll Tax. Each year hundreds of poor men and women attend Magistrates Courts for not being able to afford the licence fee.

It should be abolished.

The licence fee is used to finance the BBC, the propaganda organisation of the British state.

The BBC should be financed from advertising revenue.

John Smithee
Cambridgeshire

'I'm living on nothing due to Universal Credit'

I GET paid Universal Credit once a fortnight because I've had payments split to try and help my situation.

I've had my Employment Support Allowance (ESA) assessment and they say I've got limited capability for work. I am waiting to hear whether I can get ESA or not.

I have depression, anxiety and vertigo. I have to have injections in my hips every three months.

And I have arthritis in my back, my hips and my hands.

Tracy Matthews
Warwickshire

Out of the £105 I get a fortnight, I can't afford to buy food.

I'm living on nothing and when I get paid later this month, I'm down to £70 a fortnight by the time I put gas and electric on.

The Department for Work and Pensions doesn't care. As long as they get paid and can afford to live they're fine.

Universal Credit is doing more harm than good. It should be scrapped.

Roy Greenslade
Guardian newspaper has found no evidence of that.

MANY WILL be heartened to have read a message of support for Julian Assange in the *Guardian* newspaper last week.

And to learn that the editor of *The Daily Express*, and possibly those of other major newspapers, believe he should not be extradited.

For many the most serious issue regarding Assange is the possibility that his revelations led to the deaths of undercover agents.

Roy Greenslade of the *Guardian* newspaper has found no evidence of that.

Julian Assange

And US General Robert Carr said under oath in the trial of Chelsea Manning that the US government had not been able to find any such incidents.
The core accusation

against Assange is that he is a spy. He is charged with espionage.

The definition of a spy is a person employed by a government or other organisation to secretly obtain information on an enemy or competitor.

It is self evident that Julian Assange was not engaged in that activity. He is not a spy.

He does not deserve to spend the rest of his life in prison in the US under the Espionage Act of 1917.

Brendan O'Brien
North London

No to longer prison terms

SOME PEOPLE called for longer jail sentences after the south London stabbings earlier this month.

But as Socialist Worker pointed out last week, rates of self-harm in prisons are soaring.

Calls for harsher sentences play into the idea that some people—Muslims—will always be "dangerous".

And they also threaten to seriously harm even more people.

Lucy Wilson
West Yorkshire

SYSTEM THAT'S RIGGED FOR OIL

Multinational bosses plan to keep pumping out more oil and gas—despite climate catastrophe. Sarah Bates looks at why we have to keep fossil fuels in the ground and why the industry is so central to how capitalism operates

THERE'S HARDLY a resource more critical to modern capitalism than oil—the whole system is powered by it. From petrol-guzzling vehicles and plastics to wars that ravage the Middle East, oil has been big business for over 100 years.

Now the spotlight is on how fossil fuels drive the rapidly escalating climate crisis.

The root cause of climate change is 150 years of the industrial-scale burning of oil, coal and gas. This has heated up the global atmosphere by 1.5 degrees—and how much hotter it's going to get, nobody knows yet.

The discovery of oil in 1859 was a key turning point in capitalist development. At first oil didn't have many

uses, but soon a handful of corporations had monopolised production and ruthlessly grew the industry.

They fueled the growth of the car, chemicals and other industries reliant on oil.

From the 1930s to 1950s, US bosses actively worked to sabotage alternatives. A cartel of oil and automobile companies bought up public transport in cities across the US, ripped up tram lines and replaced them with buses.

Transport remains the biggest consumer of oil—in Britain, for instance, 75 percent of oil goes on road and air transport.

But oil underpins a range of other sectors and commodities, including many we use in our everyday lives. They now include fertilisers and pesticides, detergents, paints and medicines, debit cards, shampoos and stationary.

As the oil industry fought for new markets for petrol, spin-off industries did the same for their products. Since the 1930s chemical industry bosses invested in coming up with a vast range of new plastics—and 99 percent of them derive from oil and gas production.

Not only are fossil fuels

central to capitalism, they are a key driver of climate catastrophe.

Scientists have said for at least three decades that dramatically reducing their use is key for tackling global warming. As far back as the 1992 UN summit in Rio de Janeiro, they accepted that fossil fuels were behind the crisis that blew a hole in Earth's ozone layer.

But instead of cutting back, the industry is pouring billions of pounds into new oil rigs and power plants.

Oil firms claim that they're responding to the climate emergency by investing in initiatives such as solar energy or electric cars. But their efforts to finance wind, tidal and solar power are completely outmatched by the huge amounts of money they're pouring into traditional, dirty energy expansion.

In 2018, the world's top 24 oil firms invested £2.6 billion in low carbon energy technology. To put that into context, the International Energy Agency says the oil industry generates more than £552 billion of investible cash each year.

The solution to the climate crisis will require international cooperation, decarbonisation of the economy and unpreceded infrastructure projects among other radical changes.

But in some ways, the solution is incredibly simple.

Carbon dioxide is the biggest greenhouse gas, and it's caused by burning fossil fuels.



£2.4 BILLION

The combined spending on low carbon technology by the world's top 24 oil firms

£552 BILLION

The amount the oil industry generates in investible cash each year

PROTESTING AT big oil, the world's biggest polluters (below)



President Trump loves the oil industry—and it loves him back

Time is running out to take meaningful action for the future of the planet. Before capitalism ruins it, we should burn down the system and create a new socialist society from the ashes.



Sisters at war

A CABAL of dominant oil firms dubbed the "Seven Sisters" had a stranglehold on the oil industry for three decades from the 1940s.

The dominance of these multinational corporations has been undermined by state-owned oil companies.

The Seven Sisters controlled around 85 percent of oil output until a crisis in 1973.

That's when states in the Opec oil cartel, then largely based in the Middle East, stopped exporting oil to Western countries to increase the price.

Oil prices plummeted in the 1990s. Bosses pushed through mergers and buyouts to increase production and cut overhead costs.

Just last week BP bought out the BHP firm for £8 billion—in a move set to boost its oil and gas production by almost a fifth.

But the global picture is different today.

Western oil firms still have vast revenue and profits.

But unlike the Seven Sisters, they control about 6 percent of global oil and gas reserves.

Energy companies don't directly fight wars to maintain control of their interests—but back up states that can guarantee the profits keep rolling in.

Western governments cloak these manoeuvres in the language of "liberation" and "freedom".

Its vast oil reserves—and how central it is to capitalism—means the Middle East is a battleground for imperial rivalries. Securing control of the region is important for solidifying their military, political and economic dominance within the global economy.

Each company and each state is locked into an eternal competition with their rivals to gain a bigger slice of the pie. They're all fighting not get swallowed up or driven out of business.

So it's capitalism—and specifically the competition inherent in it—that drives these conflicts.

Oil isn't just careering us towards climate catastrophe. At every stage of its extraction, production and combustion, the industry symbolises not only capitalism's disregard for the planet, but for the people who live on it.

Oil demand grows even though the planet burns

IF OIL extraction continues at the same pace, the results will be disastrous. If it increases, the consequences are unfathomable.

This means the short-term drive for profits comes ahead of planet and people. So the problem is not just the fat cats who sit in the boardrooms or the politicians who protect their wealth and power.

It's the entire system that to blame—and the oil and fossil production are central to it.

Fighting for a greener version of capitalism doesn't confront the social, economic and political forces behind it.

It's not eating hamburgers or flying abroad for a holiday that powers the utter devastation seen by the floods in Jakarta, cyclone Idai in southern Africa or the bushfires in Australia. These events are a result of a climate catastrophe powered by a system built in the interests of the billionaires.

But the US was pumping 17.8 million barrels a day in November 2019—up from an average of 15.5 million the previous year.

ExxonMobil is planning to pump 25 percent more oil and gas in 2025 than other types of mining.

than in 2017. Rising anger over climate change is pushing the fossil fuel firms to appear as though they are changing.

At a shareholders meeting in May 2019, over 99 percent of BP shareholders voted in favour of a resolution by the Climate Action 100+ group. It called on the firm to make greater disclosures on its emissions and show how investments agree with the Paris climate agreements.

But bosses were quick to point out that any changes wouldn't be hurting their bottom line.

BP chairman Helge Lund said, "My mission is to see BP advancing the transition while remaining an attractive investment proposition."

Firms are also grabbing new opportunities to build fracking or tar sands operations.

Tar sands is extracted through "strip mining", where everything on the surface is removed to get to the oil. It releases even more emissions than other types of mining.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } PUBLIC MEETINGS

BLACK COUNTRY

Get Trump's hands off Palestine

Wed 19 Feb, 7.15pm,
St. Peter's Café,
4 Exchange St,
WV1 1TS

BRADFORD

Women, resistance and revolution

Thu 5 Mar, 7pm,
Bread + Roses,
14 N Parade,
BD1 3HT

CARDIFF

Booklaunch—System Change Not Climate Change

Wed 26 Feb, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
43 Charles St,
CF10 2GB

CREWE & STOKE-ON-TRENT

Booklaunch—System Change Not Climate Change

Thu 12 Mar, 7.15pm,
Royal Voluntary Service,
29 Charles Street,
ST1 3JP

GLASGOW

Booklaunch—Transgender Resistance, Socialism and the Fight for Trans Liberation

Tue 18 Feb, 7pm,
Avant Garde,
33-44 King St,
Merchant City, G1 5QT

GREATER MANCHESTER

Booklaunch—Transgender Resistance, Socialism and the Fight for Trans Liberation

Wed 26 Feb, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
6 Mount St, M2 5NS

LIVERPOOL

Booklaunch—Transgender Resistance, Socialism and the Fight for Trans Liberation

Wed 19 Feb, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
22 School Ln, L1 3BT

LUTON & ST ALBANS

Booklaunch—System Change Not Climate Change

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm,
Stockwood Hotel,
41-43 Stockwood Crescent,
LU1 3SS

OXFORD

Fifty years of the Women's Liberation Movement—struggles, gains and battles to win

Thu 20 Feb, 7pm,
Oxford Town Hall,
St Aldate's, OX1 1BX

PORTSMOUTH

Revolt in France—how workers can fight back

Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
Somersetown
Community Centre,
River's St,
PO5 4EZ

SOCIALIST WORKER PUBLIC MEETINGS

WOULD THE planet be better off if there were less of us?

Too many people? Climate change and the myth of overpopulation

BRIGHTON & HOVE

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Ship St,
BN1 1AF

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE

Thu 20 Feb, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Meeting House Lane,
LA1 1TX

LONDON: ISLINGTON

Thu 20 Feb, 7pm,
Elizabeth House,
2 Hurlock St,
Highbury, N5 1ED

HUDDERSFIELD

Wed 19 Feb, 6.30pm,
Brian Jackson House,
2 New North Parade (near
both train and bus stations),
HD1 5JP

LONDON: HACKNEY

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm,
The Round Chapel,
2 Powerscroft Rd,
E5 0PU

LONDON: WEST & NORTH WEST

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm,
Woodlane Community
Centre, 78 White City Cl,
Shepherd's Bush, W12 7DZ

SHEFFIELD AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Booklaunch—Transgender Resistance, Socialism and the Fight for Trans Liberation

Thu 20 Feb, 7pm,
Central United Reform Church,
60 Norfolk St,
S1 2JB

BIRMINGHAM

Austerity and resistance—could Britain follow France?

Wed 19 Feb, 7pm,
The Church at Carrs Lane,
Carrs Ln, B4 7SX

BRADFORD

Fake news and bias—who controls the media?

Thu 20 Feb, 7pm,
Bread + Roses,
14 N Parade, BD1 3HT

{ SOCIALIST WORKER }

BRANCH MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss
political issues and our local
interventions. All welcome.

ABERDEEN

Revolt in France—how workers can fight back

Mon 17 Feb, 6pm,
The Snug,
Ma Cameron's,
6-8 Little Belmont St,
AB10 1JG

BRISTOL

Why is the working class the most revolutionary class?

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm,
YHA, 14 Narrow Quay,
BS1 4QA

BURNLEY AND PENDLE

Can there be a socialist in the White House?

Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
Red Triangle Cafe,
160 St James's St, BB11 1NR

CARDIFF

Rosa Luxemburg—a revolutionary for today

Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
Cathays Community Centre,
Cathays Terrace, CF24 4HX

CHESTERFIELD

Get Trump's hands off Palestine

Thu 20 Feb, 7pm,
Chesterfield Library,
New Beetwell St, S40 1QN

COLCHESTER

Are we entering a new age of global revolt?

Thu 27 Feb, 8pm,
Hythe Community Centre,
1 Ventura Drive, CO1 2FG

COVENTRY

Are we entering a new age of global revolt?

Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
The Golden Cross,
8 Hay Ln, CV1 5RF

LONDON: SOUTH EAST

Feeling the Bern—can there be a socialist in the white House?

Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
Deptford Lounge,
9 Giffin St,
SE8 4RH

DERBY

Marxism and mental health

Thu 20 Feb, 7pm,
West End Community Centre,
Mackworth Rd (next
to Britannia Mill),
DE22 3BL

EDINBURGH

Who was Hegel and why does he matter?

Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
7 Victoria St,
EH1 2JL

EXETER

Are we entering a new age of global revolt?

Wed 19 Feb, 7pm,
The Exeter Peace Shop,
31 New Bridge St,
EX4 3AH

HARLOW

Australia to Jakarta—what's behind the climate crisis?

Thu 20 Feb, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
1 Church Leys,
CM18 6BX

KENT

Is our diet destroying the planet?

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm,
Nucleus Arts Centre
(Conference Room),
272 High St,
Chatham,
ME4 4BP

LEEDS: CITY CENTRE

Do genes influence our behaviour?

Thu 20 Feb, 7pm,
Restore Building,
Manzil Way,
OX4 1YH

PLYMOUTH

Can non-violent direct action bring about change?

Thu 27 Feb, 7pm,
Quaker House,
74 Mutley Plain,
PL4 6LF

POOLE AND DORCHESTER

A Marxist history of the Labour Party

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm,
Colliton Club,
Colliton House,
DT1 1XJ

SCARBOROUGH

Politics of the mind—capitalism and mental health

Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
Tap and Spile,
94 Falsgrave Rd,
YO12 5AZ

SOUTHAMPTON

Fake news and alternative facts—who controls the media?

Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
Central Baptist Church Hall,
Devonshire Rd,
SO15 2GY

SWANSEA

Is our diet destroying the planet?

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm,
Brynmill Community Centre,
St Albans Rd,
SA2 0BP

YORK

Marxism and asexuality

Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
Sea Horse Hotel,
4 Fawcett St,
YO10 4AH

{ MOVEMENT EVENTS }

NATIONAL

March against racism

Sat 21 Mar, 12 noon,
London and Glasgow
Called by Stand Up To Racism
Go to standuptoracism.org.uk

CONTACT THE SWP

Phone 020 7840 5600

Email enquiries@swp.org.uk

Post PO Box 74955,

London E16 9EJ



Mr Jones shows the horror of Stalin's counter-revolution

A film about a journalist who uncovers famine in Ukraine could have fallen to smug pro-Westernism. But, writes Tomáš Tengely-Evans, it has more to say

A FILM about a Western liberal journalist who exposes Russian crimes and fake news seems like a plot made for every self-satisfied "centrist dad".

But Mr Jones, a new historical drama, tells a story of when writing about the Russian state's murder of seven million people meant challenging the mainstream.

Gareth Jones—James Norton—a Welsh journalist, has just made his name by interviewing Adolf Hitler in 1933. He is painfully right-on, teetotal and sees himself as a guardian of "liberal values".

Jones manages to get a visa to Joseph Stalin's Russia, where a journalist friend has told him there's a big story in Ukraine.

At the plush Metropol Hotel, Western journalists drink, shoot heroin at parties, and file copy of industrial breakthroughs. The creepy Walter Duranty—Peter Sarsgaard—The New York Times newspaper's bureau chief, leads this set of debauchery and denial.

Determined to find the truth, Jones travels illegally into Ukraine. He finds a society brutalised by famine—something the film doesn't shy away from showing in its full horror through a series of haunting scenes.

The famine Jones found was the product of a society in the grip of Stalin's counter-revolution.

The regime forced through industrialisation in a terrifically short time in order to catch up and compete with other imperialist powers in the West.

Repression

Political repression of peasants, forced collectivisation of land and droughts led to a number of famines across Russia in 1932-33.

After he leaves Russia, Jones' reports are discredited, with Duranty at the head of the denials.

The majority of the left defended Stalin as a continuation of the Russian Revolution of 1917, when ordinary people had seized power.

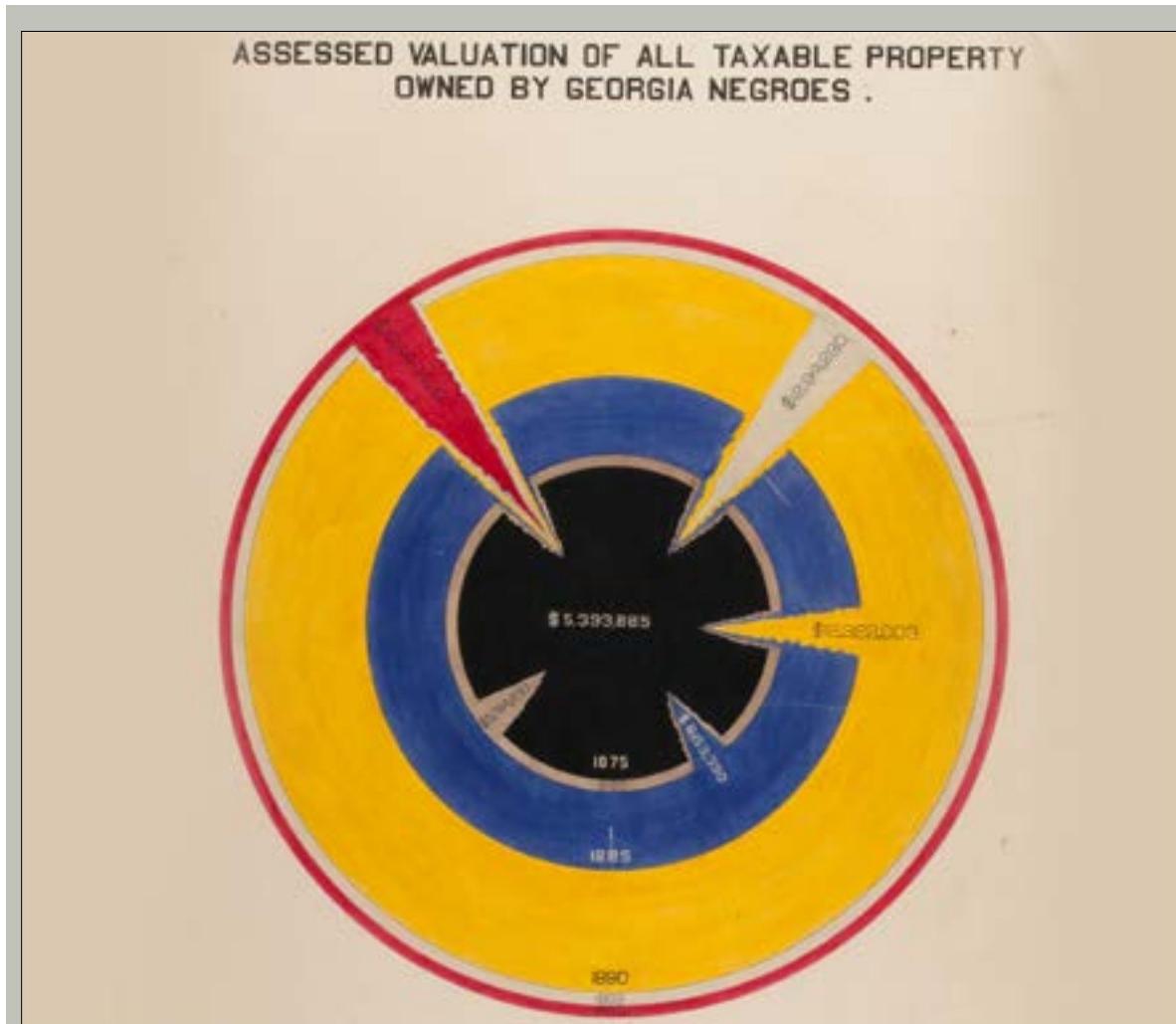
Duranty is presented as one of these, saying, "You can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs."

But this portrayal isn't quite true. Duranty looked down on Russians as an "Asiatic" people suited to authoritarian rule and saw Stalin as a statesman the West should do business with.

His stories of Russian industrial achievements were aimed at normalising diplomatic relations—which formally happened in 1933.

Mr Jones could have been a smug defence of liberal journalism—but it tells a story much better than that.

Mr Jones is in cinemas now



THE HAND-DRAWN posters aimed to show black Americans were flourishing

DuBois's graphics challenged racism

EXHIBITION

WEB DUBOIS—CHARTING BLACK LIVES

House of Illustration, 2 Granary Sq, London N1C 4BH.
Until 1 March 2020, £8

US BLACK radical thinker WEB DuBois set out to shock the 1900 Paris Exposition with a display of colour infographics.

His posters showed that black Americans—and their art, culture and education—were flourishing in just four decades after the civil war that ended slavery.

Upper class Europeans had for years debated whether free black people were as capable as whites. Many, but not all, thought of Africa and its descendants in the US as a human "subspecies"

with a different morality and aptitude, and undoubtedly inferior.

In Paris, various colonialist enterprises erected fake African villages and paid people from the continent to act as "savages".

DuBois wanted to smash the racists and their prejudices with facts.

His posters were a set of beautifully crafted and carefully hand drawn graphs that took on the myths of the day.

A cone graph called American Negro newspapers and periodicals sits alongside others showing a steep rise in black literacy rates since the abolition of slavery.

His posters tried to tell those in Paris everything you could measure about black life in

the US. It captured a living community in numbers.

How many black children were enrolled in public schools, how far family budgets extended, what people did for work, even the value of people's kitchen furniture.

His graphical techniques, combined with his rigorous research, won over many who were not impressed with the rest of the exhibition. Even the organisers were forced to concede this truth and awarded him the exhibition's gold medal.

In the decades that followed DuBois grew ever more radical as it became clear that racism was built into the system, and those that ruled did not respond to his logical arguments.

Yuri Prasad

EXHIBITION

UTOPIAS

The Whitworth Collection
The University Of Manchester,
Oxford Rd, Manchester
M15 6ER
Free

THIS EXHIBITION brings together historic, modern and contemporary works to examine how utopian societies have been imagined and represented.

In his seminal book *Utopia*, in 1516, Thomas More came up with an idea that captured the human imagination. That of aspiring to an ideal future, an improved world, a better society.

More imagined it as an island community—
independent, insular and



Thomas More's Utopia

able to prescribe its own ways of living.

This exhibition crosses genres, media and eras.

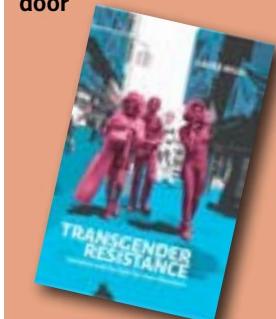
It says it provides "a playful and provocative" look at how Britain's literary and visual culture has perpetuated an idea of a utopian society.

What's on at BOOKMARKS

the socialist bookshop

Transgender Resistance

With author Laura Miles
Friday 28 Feb, 6.30pm
Admission £2, pay on the door



1 Bloomsbury Street,
London WC1B 3QE
020 7637 1848
bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

SINN FEIN has been a bogeyman—real and imagined—for the British state for over a century.

This began in earnest in the aftermath of an armed insurrection—the 1916 Easter Rising—against British rule in Ireland. British propaganda targeted so-called Sinn Fein rebels as the insurgents.

It was the name of a party founded by Arthur Griffith in 1905. Griffith dreamed of Irish capitalists making enough profits to compete with Britain.

He believed in an Anglo-Irish empire ruled by the queen. He had little problem encouraging racism, and detested socialism and any form of working class militancy.

Griffith didn't participate in the 1916 rising and urged others not to. Sinn Fein was at a low ebb.

Nonetheless, it became the focal point for open political organising against brutal British repression following the rising.

Previous generations of nationalists were discredited for making peace with Britain.

Sinn Fein quickly became the means by which more respectable elements of Irish society could reconnect with the growing resistance.

Some 1,700 delegates attended a reborn Sinn Fein gathering in 1917.

A month later another meeting of the military organisation, the Irish Volunteers that became the IRA, took place. Eamon de Valera, who had been part of the rising, was elected president.

The republican movement now had a political and a military wing—and so key elements were in place. These included an emphasis on national unity that cut across class and postponement of debate on what type of free Ireland they wanted.

The military wing officially complemented the political wing but in reality it dominated.

If including wealthier elements led to compromises on national freedom, more militant elements could look to armed struggle in the absence of a left alternative.

A process of armed struggle, constitutional compromise, and more armed struggle was built into the movement.

A British general election in 1918 saw Sinn Fein win 73 out of 105 seats in Ireland. They set up their own parliament—the First Dail. It met on 21 January 1919. The same day attacks on British forces signalled the start of the war for independence.

Sinn Fein was not the only possible beneficiary of militant opposition. A general strike in 1918 against conscription had shown the potential for workers to push struggle forward.



SINN FEIN leader Mary Lou McDonald on the campaign trail

THE TWO FACES OF SNN FEIN

The party made an historic breakthrough in last weekend's Irish election. Simon Baskett looks at Sinn Fein's history and explains why it has won mass working class support



Arthur Griffith

Radical rhetoric was the flip side of doing deals with the establishment

De Valera said achieving national unity meant labour must wait. The Irish Labour Party took him literally and stood aside in the election, effectively withdrawing from any leading role in the independence fight.

By 1920, a guerrilla war stretched British control to breaking point. Britain responded with more repression.

Meanwhile in the north, Unionist leaders declared

war on Catholics. There were pogroms and shipyards were cleared of Catholic workers and "rotten Prods"—socialists.

While the British government was still nominally in charge of Ireland, the Dail was a government with the full paraphernalia of parliamentary rule.

Through the 1970s and 1980s Sinn Fein developed renewed leftist rhetoric. Talk of imminent victory was dropped and a new "long war" strategy adopted.

Nationalist movements look

independence marked the start of the end of the British Empire. In 1922 the Dail agreed to ratify the Treaty, which accepted the partition of Ireland.

It flung the country into a year-long civil war, but participation remained.

Pro-Treaty supporters formed a new party, Cumann na nGaedheal, that governed the new Irish state for nine years. It merged with other organisations, some attracted to fascism, to form Fine Gael in 1933.

Anti-Treaty Sinn Fein members continued to boycott the Dail until 1926, when de Valera proposed they take their seats.

When his motion was defeated, de Valera resigned from Sinn Fein and founded Fianna Fail. It became Ireland's main bosses' party for decades.

Nationalism could mobilise large sections of the working class. But Sinn Fein had failed to win the national liberation of Ireland. Its ties to landlords and bosses held it back.

Sinn Fein held its flame aloft but it flickered gradually more weakly as the carnival of reaction of the two Irish states North and South solidified.

Revolutionary nationalists do not seek to end class rule but to cut out a space for themselves within the existing order.

So the shift from armed struggle to conventional politics is not always as far a journey as it might appear.

Radical rhetoric—the radicalism of blowing things up—was the flip side of looking to do deals with the establishment.

And any left rhetoric always lacked recognition that the working class, as a class, could free itself. The volunteer with a gun was the key agent of change. When that fails, the movement is there to back the men behind the desk.

Today Sinn Fein's declared aim is to be in government North and South simultaneously. Through this it hopes to speed the way to a united Ireland.

The issue mattered because republican legitimacy rested on their claim to be the real government of Ireland based on an unbroken legacy that stretched back to the First Dail.

So taking part in a parliament is often justified by increasing radical rhetoric. This can be the language of armed militancy or it can be more left wing.

As repression intensified and armed resistance replaced mass struggle, the Provisionals' influence grew. Meanwhile the Officials detoured through Stalinism and splits—with what's left wallowing in the Irish Labour Party.

Irish bosses and landlords demanded Sinn Fein restore order. It did—by, for instance reining in land occupations.

In July 1921 the British government called a truce. Irish

to both bosses and workers, because loyalty to the nation trumps any class interests.

So the republican use of socialist language went hand in hand with fundraising from right wing US politicians.

In the late 1970s and early 80s, during the fight for a restoration of political status for prisoners and hunger strikers, Sinn Fein was hostile to elections.

It soon did an about-turn and emphasised using elections to win some nationalists in the political establishment north and south.

In 1986, Sinn Fein dropped its abstentionism to the Dail and Stormont. The grassroots were promised an "armalite and ballot box" strategy but were reassured the first was primary.

The political psychology behind "bombing to the negotiating table" rested on an ability to carry off repeated "spectaculars" that shook the establishment.

The British state couldn't beat the IRA but the reverse was also true. That made the political wing more dominant. They followed the route of their predecessors.

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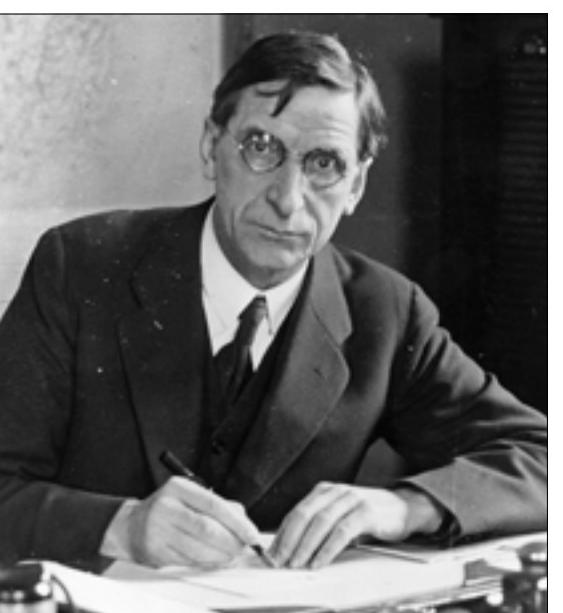
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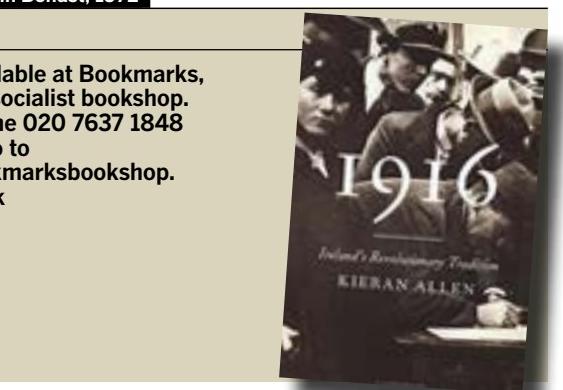
In July 1921 the British government called a truce. Irish



British troops take aim at a civil rights march in Belfast in July 1970 (top). Eamon de Valera (above)



A British soldier in Belfast, 1972



Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to bookmarksbookshop.co.uk



FOCUS ON HEALTH

Drive for profit benefits the spread of disease



BATS MAY have been the source of the coronavirus

BACK STORY

The coronavirus originated in China but has spread all over the world

- There's confirmed infections in at least 25 countries

- The World Health Organisation has declared a global health emergency

- A handful of people have been tested positive in Britain

exposure to pollution will mean poor people have weaker immune systems.

And poorer people are also less likely to report symptoms as they are unable to afford medical treatment.

This combined with fear increases the likelihood of disease spreading.

Crisis

According to Tim Benton, professor of Population Ecology at Leeds university, the problem of new disease patterns can only be understood as part of a wider system.

"Societies and governments tend to treat each new infectious disease as an independent crisis, rather than recognising they are a symptom of how the world is changing," he said.

"The more we change the environment, the more likely we are to disrupt ecosystems and provide opportunities for disease to emerge."

There are ways to stop this cycle, but they all involve challenging the primacy of profit. Building decent houses, improving sanitation, waste disposal and pest control are crucial but costly measures that capitalism should be made to pay for.

So are farming systems developed to avoid risk of cross-infection.

But there also needs to be new thinking about the relationship between people and the wilderness.

Despite the huge risks involved in doing nothing, it seems that is exactly what our rulers are going to do.

Each new virus has a tendency to be worse than the last



What comes next for the left after Corbyn?

Activists gathered in London last week to debate why Labour lost last year's general election, and where now for the left after the end of Corbynism



**PCS general secretary
Mark Serwotka**
'We need a united trade union response'

THE LEFT needs political clarity. We need to understand what went on in the last few years.

But we also need to mobilise political activity and action and we need to be lifting people's spirits and morale. The game is not up for five years.

The left needs to participate in debate. But, if we only debate and don't struggle then we're not doing anyone any good.

In PCS we have a strike that has just started at the Foreign Office. We have maintenance workers—workers that often get forgotten—out on strike for a month.

They are striking for union recognition in the private sector.

We need to have those struggles whether they are small and local, global, industrial or political.

And we need to bring people together and fight back.

No struggle is too small to get union support. And no struggle is too big that we should scare ourselves into thinking that we can't win.

The last two years have been dominated by a radical leader of the Labour Party and a minority Tory government continually losing votes in parliament.

In Labour we fought an election with the most radical manifesto in my lifetime. We all

hoped that we would see Corbyn in Number 10. We should recognise that the defeat was shattering.

I think there is a collective labour movement issue of how we relate to the divisions in the working class around Brexit.

The Labour Party started with a very carefully crafted position, both before and after the referendum.

That position was to respect the result and fight to defend jobs and freedom of movement.

But in the last year, many people—including myself—got caught up in the parliamentary theatrics. Labour rapidly fast forwarded to a second referendum and remain.

We need to debate what effect this has had on working class people and how we can reconnect with them.

It's not just Brexit. The disconnect started under Tony Blair. Voters became disenchanted and Brexit pushed them over the edge.

It's important that we relate to the Labour Party leadership election. In a party of over

500,000, the key for the left is whether the Labour leader believes in public ownership, redistribution of wealth and scrapping universal credit. Or will they take the Labour Party back to the centre?

Forward

We should intervene in these discussions to argue for the bold socialist policies that were put forward.

In five years the general election will be a critical issue for socialists. I am keen to have a discussion of what this means in practice.

At the same time we are about to see a Tory government that was fairly paralysed and is now going to go on the offensive very rapidly.

I raise this because the government is about to launch the most brazen and provocative attack on public sector workers' pensions.

That requires a clear and bold response. This includes a united trade union response.

If there isn't an immediate and angry response then the government is going to get away with it.

My opinion on what's next for the left is that we need to resist.

We have the climate struggle. And we have workers out on strike.

We need to make sure that the climate strike is huge.

If we could argue for co-ordinated national strikes it could transform the mood across Britain.



A Foreign Office striker



**Socialist Worker Editor
Charlie Kimber**
'Fight for a stronger socialist challenge'

TWO things changed on 12 December. One was the end of an era of focus on Jeremy Corbyn and a prospect of a left Labour government.

The second is the end of an era in which Tories didn't have a stable parliamentary majority.

I think we're much closer to a situation that existed in the 1980s when the Margaret Thatcher government—in parliamentary terms—could do what it wanted.

The focus of resistance cannot be in parliament and cannot be around the Labour.

This doesn't mean that what happened in the election doesn't matter. It does matter.

We need to interrogate what happened in that election result.

Accident

It's not an accident that 52 out of the 54 seats that Labour lost to the Tories were in places that had voted Leave.

It was completely wrong for the Labour Party to adopt a second referendum position. But that wasn't the only thing that mattered.

I think that the disgusting and disreputable use of antisemitism slurs against Corbyn and the Labour Party—and the fact that they gave in and compromised with those slurs—was important.

The action of a hostile right wing media was of course important.

And the actions of Labour councillors

implementing and attacking ordinary working class people was important.

Too often workers were forced to strike not against Tory councils but against Labour councils that were cutting their jobs and their wages.

In 1997, 59 percent of the worst paid people voted for the Labour Party. In 2019, 39 percent of them voted for the Labour Party.

This is about a Labour Party that turned their back on working class people.

We need raise our sights about what's possible.

No one expected to see the revolts we have seen in Chile, Hong Kong, Lebanon.

The point is not just whether there'll be resistance. The point is what the politics of that resistance will be.

I don't think that the crucial thing about the resistance is making sure that Rebecca Long-Bailey becomes leader of the Labour Party. And

We have to found a movement which is strong enough to put forward a stronger socialist challenge inside all the movements that are happening and bring them together.

We need a stronger internationalist movement based upon genuine socialist ideas. This means a revolutionary socialist party bringing together all these issues.

Watch the full discussion online at bit.ly/nextforleft



Protesting in Hong Kong

IN BRIEF

Jam workers fight to preserve conditions

JAM WORKERS in Histon, near Cambridge, could walk out to defend their terms and conditions.

The Unite union members at the Hain Daniels Group will "consider a ballot for industrial action" if no progress is made in talks this week.

It comes after bosses plan "radical changes" to contracts. This would give around 260 workers worse sick pay, no enhanced redundancy packages or pay protection when shifts are altered.

Workers make Hartley's jam.

Revolt at Harrods posh people's shop

SECURITY GUARDS and CCTV operators at Harrods in west London have announced a series of strikes over pay and working conditions.

Unite union members at the store plan to walk out on 22, 26 and 29 of February and on 4 and 7 March.

St Mungo's vote for action over attacks

HUNDREDS OF workers at the St Mungo's housing charity across London and the south of England could be heading for strikes against a "race to the bottom".

Over 500 Unite union members voted by 84 percent for strikes over new terms and conditions.

Cummins engineers want to stop closure

ENGINEERING workers in Cumbernauld have voted overwhelmingly for strikes to save their jobs.

Unite union members at the North Lanarkshire plant have voted by 100 percent for strikes. The turnout in the ballot was 85 percent.

Bosses at Cummins Engineering announced before Christmas that they would close the plant.

Heathrow baggage handlers' battle

BAGGAGE HANDLERS at London Heathrow Airport struck for four days for higher pay from Sunday of last week.

The Unite union members are demanding that bosses at Global Baggage Solutions pay the London Living Wage of £10.75. Workers plan a further four-day walkout from Saturday 22 February.

Woolwich ferry set to come in-house

TRANSPORT FOR London is to take over the running of the Woolwich Ferry in south east London.

The Unite union represents 56 workers in dispute with Briggs Marine Contractors Ltd, which holds the contract, over pay and other issues. A strike is set for 28 February.

TURKISH SOLIDARITY



CAMPAINERS GATHERED outside the Mulberry luxury goods shop in London last Saturday in solidarity with workers in Turkey. Mulberry sells bags supplied by SF Trade Leather. Four women workers have been dismissed for being members of a trade union at the factory. The protest was organised by Solidarity with the People of Turkey.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Traffic wardens won't wait to win pay justice

TRAFFIC WARDENS in Hackney, east London, launched a two-week walkout for higher pay on Monday.

The 40 Unite union members, who are currently on the London Living Wage of £10.75 an hour, are fighting for £15 an hour.

Workers' other demands include improved sick pay from bosses at outsourcer Apcoa—and for Labour-run Hackney council to take them back in-house.

David, a Unite member, told Socialist Worker, "Apcoa is a very large company with lots of money and we work indirectly for the council."

"But our terms and conditions are very low compared to other council employees."

"We struck two years ago and won 20 days sick pay."

"But the company tries to penalise people through an 'attendance management programme'."

"If you have five or more sick days you're on a stage three



Picketing on Monday

PICTURE: GARETH JENKINS

investigation and that's very serious."

Traffic warden Peter added, "We have no London weighting to help us with transport costs in and out of work."

Workers' anger goes deeper than pay and terms and conditions.

Bart, another worker, told Socialist Worker, "There is no respect whatsoever from management."

"When we said we were going on strike, it was the first

time they tried to be friendly towards us."

Traffic wardens were set to rally outside Hackney council's offices on Hillman Street on Wednesday and Thursday.

They planned to protest outside the Apcoa headquarters in Uxbridge, west London, on Friday of next week.

● Workers' names have been changed.

● Join the protest, Fri 21 Feb, 11am, Wellington House, 4-10 Cowley Rd, Uxbridge UB8 2XW.

GLASGOW

ICT WORKERS at Glasgow City Council are voting on whether to strike over vicious job cuts.

Some 180 Unison union members provide ICT support to schools, social care services and other departments.

They are fighting bosses' failure to replace roles when workers leave jobs.

Workers are outsourced to private firm CGI and are in dispute over staffing levels and retaining terms and conditions agreed when the contract was tendered.

● Join the workers' lobby, Tuesday 18 Feb, 12.30pm, CGI building, 151 West George Street, G2 2JJ

Celebrate resistance with Socialist Worker this May Day

May Day is a chance to celebrate working class solidarity against the bosses and resistance to oppression.

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PAY

LOCAL government workers' unions in England and Wales have rejected the employers' latest pay offer.

More than one million workers are in the GMB, Unite and Unison unions whose negotiators said no to a 2 percent increase.

The figure is below the

RPI rate of inflation and represents a pay cut.

And local government workers have seen their pay cut by 22 percent in real terms since 2010.

The unions' claim would see the lowest paid receive £10 an hour and others get a 10 percent rise.

TOWER HAMLETS

Labour council uses Tory law

DISGRACEFULLY the Labour-run Tower Hamlets council in east London is taking the NEU union to court in an effort to halt a strike.

A hearing was scheduled for Friday this week. Unison,

GMB and NEU union members are balloting for strikes over attempts to slash terms and conditions.

Consultative ballots saw overwhelming votes to strike.

The unions must defy this attack.

MANUFACTURING

Carpet strikers question what happened to ballot

STRIKERS AT Westex carpet in West Yorkshire are frustrated that they may be forced to end their fight for higher pay.

The Unite union members in Cleckheaton and Dewsbury could return to work next Monday after over 12 weeks on strike.

Some feel that Unite has weakened the dispute by not organising to renew their mandate for industrial action.

One Unite member told Socialist Worker he thought this amounted to "clear failings" by the union.

"That's such a shame because we've still got such a solid group of strikers."

Anti-unions laws say a mandate for strikes runs for six months. After that it has to be refreshed in a new ballot.

Workers have legal protections such as being sacked for trade union related activity throughout this period.

Another law says that during the first 12 weeks of a strike workers are protected from "selective

dismissal". Unions can also reballot to renew the 12-week protections.

But the union ruled out reballot at a meeting between a Unite regional legal officer and shop stewards.

At talks at the Acas conciliation service last week bosses put forward a slightly improved pay offer of 2.4 percent.

The worker said, "I was told there would be no recommendation from the union and at the time fully expected that it would be rejected unanimously."

But a letter attached to the ballot heavily implied that workers could be dismissed if they did not accept the deal.

The worker said, "It should have had the other option—to reject the deal, go back to work and keep up the dispute."

"I was told the union would send another letter, but some had already filled in the ballot while fearing dismissal."

"It's a sad day for solidarity."

REFUSE WORKERS

Fighting bullying bosses

TWO GROUPS of bin workers in London are being balloted for strikes over pay and allegations of bullying.

Around 120 refuse depot workers in Tory-run Bexley council have had enough of earning £4 an hour less than colleagues in the neighbouring borough of Greenwich.

The Unite union members at the refuse depots work for outsourcing giant Serco.

The ballot ends on Friday 21 February.

Meanwhile, around 250 bin workers in Tower

Hamlets could strike "imminently" over holiday pay arrears.

The Unite union members in the east London borough are voting on strikes in a ballot that is also set to end on 21 February.

They are owed up to £9,000 in holiday pay by Veolia.

The outsourcing manager of the service on a contract to the Labour-run council.

Unite said, "Veolia has forced individual workers to use the legal system to claim back the arrears."

ROYAL MAIL

Post workers ready to deliver strike vote

by NICK CLARK

ROYAL MAIL workers are gearing up for a second national strike ballot, as bosses promise to steamroll ahead with attacks on jobs, pay and conditions.

The CWU union announced on Tuesday of last week plans to ballot more than 110,000 postal workers, running between 3 and 17 March.

The workers are in the “fight of their lives” against a major assault on Royal Mail by chief executive Rico Back.

Bosses last week insisted that they would push ahead with attacks on jobs and conditions.

Scraping

These include scrapping some sorting offices and machines, introducing new, later deliveries for some parcels, and bringing in electronic gates at workplaces entrances.

The plans would mean job losses, increased workload and more intense monitoring of workers by management—aiming to squeeze pay and working hours.

Top bosses also said on Friday of last week they want to ditch their promise to shorten the working week to 35 hours—yet another attack on jobs and pay.

Bosses originally agreed to this in a deal with CWU



ROYAL MAIL processing workers in north London are angry

leaders in 2018. The CWU hoped a shorter working week would protect jobs against automation, in return for productivity “trials” and efficiency “savings”.

Yet bosses stalled on the promised reductions, and in a video last week said they couldn’t afford to follow through on their promises.

Instead they want to replace it with a new three-year pay deal, but didn’t say how much they would offer.

Managers also blamed Royal Mail’s falling share prices on workers’ refusals to roll over and accept their attacks.

Their goal is break up Royal Mail into a parcels

company with working conditions similar to those in Amazon and other parcels courier companies.

What remains of the letters services will be run down.

Mark Dolan, a CWU rep in north London, told Socialist Worker, “Royal Mail blinked. They’re shooting from the hip.

“We announced a national strike ballot and suddenly there’s a three year pay deal.

“All this does is wind the members up. They see right through it.”

Ballot

The national ballot will be the second in a year.

CWU members voted overwhelmingly to strike last year, but action was called off after bosses got a high court injunction to rule the ballot illegal.

Several CWU branches had also asked for local ballots against bosses’ attempts to ram through changes, after being told to by union leaders.

Yet those ballots may not go ahead now that a national one has been called.

Royal Mail has so far been allowed to delay strikes by workers while it rams through its attacks.

Regional strikes would help to step up the resistance now—and build momentum for national strikes.

SCHOOLS

East London fight against academisation heats up

by MIRIAM SCHARF

WORKERS AT St Michael’s, a small primary school in Newham, east London, struck for the seventh time on Thursday of last week.

They are fighting plans to turn their school into an academy.

The NEU union members planned two more days of strikes this week, followed by three days next week.

The strikes follow a victory at nearby St Angela’s school in January.

There, the governing body agreed not to consider academisation in the next five years following strikes.

Now other schools in Newham are trying to halt plans by the Brentwood Diocese to create a giant Catholic Multi Academy Trust (MAT) across five boroughs.

Teachers at St Michael’s have organised leafletting, petitioning, and held meetings with parents.

The school’s governing body rejected the teachers’ offer to participate in a working party looking into all alternatives for the school’s future.

St Michael’s teachers were joined last week by St Bonaventure’s NEU members taking the first of their six agreed strike days.

Union representatives, after a “positive” discussion, held hopes the governing body and head would back down, but were told a few days later, “We’re not signing anything.”

At the strike rally last week the rep said his colleagues worked incredibly hard and cared about the children and education, and that he didn’t want to work for a business.

The two schools are set to

be joined in future strikes by workers at St Bede’s, another small primary in the sights of the MAT.

Their ballot result of 74 percent for strikes on a 90 percent turnout came in last week.

Louise Cuffaro, Newham NEU Joint Secretary, reported the MAT had employed a project manager and a firm of solicitors.

Their intentions to proceed with academisation of this “second wave” of schools was clear.

Intentions

Dominic Byrne from the union’s national executive committee argued that more strike days would bring the employer to see sense.

In the Diocese of Westminster, which had a similar plan in 2016, schools that opposed academisation have stayed with the local authority.

COVENTRY

COVENTRY NEU union has used collective power to win significant pay increases.

Most of the authority’s schools have been paying some staff at lower rates than the national pay scales.

Our reps have organised meetings, and challenged managements. With the threat of strikes where schools do not back down, nearly every employer has moved to the correct rate.

We have won hundreds of thousands of pounds for NEU members and strengthened organisation. There are still two schools who have refused to budge but our reps won’t cease until we win.
Chris Denson

TRANSPORT

Bus drivers steer to strikes

BUS WORKERS in London have delivered an overwhelming vote to strike in a consultative ballot in a crucial fight over safety of workers and passengers.

Unite union members in the capital voted for strikes by an average of 97 percent on Friday last week.

Their “sick and tired” campaign focuses on demands around fatigue and exhaustion that are shattering workers’ lives.

John Murphy, Unite regional officer said, “The ballot must act as an immediate wake up call to London bus operators.

“They must take immediate action to introduce effective and comprehensive fatigue management systems.”

Workers are fighting for better scheduling of shifts, full rest breaks, proper break time facilities, an ability to leave work on time and being treated with respect.

The result paves the way for a formal ballot which could see 20,000 bus workers strike together.

Unite should immediately begin a ballot and trade unionists should organise for a huge vote for strikes.

LONDON Underground workers on the Bakerloo line are preparing to strike for four days over timetable changes.

The RMT union members are due to walk out on 21, 22, 23 and 24 February. Union members voted by 95 percent for action.

UNIVERSITIES

>>continued from page 20 over their jobs. Now people are employed in factory-like conditions,” he told Socialist Worker.

Right wingers tried to undermine the struggle by claiming the strikes don’t have support.

Yet as UCU negotiator Jo McNeill said, “Members all over the country debated the next phase of action.

“They showed overwhelming support for maintaining the dual disputes strategy and for 14 more days of impactful action. They are up for a serious fight.”

Mark Abel, a UCU rep at Brighton university and another UCU negotiator, agreed. “Some people are apprehensive,” he said. “But in my inbox, they have been outnumbered by people asking

how they can join in with the action.”

A fantastic eight-day strike last year showed the strength of feeling.

Some 3,500 people joined the union within three weeks of the action being called. Carlo said recruitment to the union is “going through the roof again”.

Jo said, “The demands we are making are winnable. Our collective action can bring these wins home.”

Ordinary union members taking control of the action will be key to winning. “This strike has been created by the rank and file,” said Carlo. “They need to determine the outcome.”

● Strike dates vary from university to university. For more information on strike dates visit bit.ly/UCUdates

UNIVERSITY workers are set to begin strikes at five institutions across Scotland next week.

The EIS-ULA union members are fighting a below-inflation 1.8 percent pay offer.

Workers at Edinburgh Napier, Aberdeen, Strathclyde and Glasgow School of Art planned to strike on 20 and 25 February, and on 2, 12 and 13 March. Those at the University of the West of Scotland planned to strike on 20 and 25 February, and on 2, 11 and 12 March.

TRADE UNIONISTS and students are fighting the victimisation of UCU union rep Julie Hearn.

Julie is the president of the UCU union at Lancaster university and

a lecturer in African and Latin American politics.

She is also an elected member of the union’s national executive.

Students have launched an open letter to the interim vice chancellor in her defence.

The letter says that “intimidation and bullying of workers and trade unionists at Lancaster University is endemic.”

“Dr Hearn is highly respected by the students and alumni she has taught, and she has our full support and solidarity.”

“Discrimination against trade union members by Lancaster University is abhorrent and must be stopped immediately.”

● Read more at bit.ly/defendjuliehearn and bit.ly/spineless-article

Sixth form college walkouts hit hard

Workers are striking back against savage cuts crushing education, reports **Sadie Robinson**

STRIKES WERE set to hit 34 sixth form colleges on Wednesday this week.

It will be the fourth walkout for the NEU union members in their battle over pay and funding.

The union says there is a shortfall of £700 million for post-16 education.

Jean Evanson is the post-16 national executive committee member for the union and a union rep at Shrewsbury Sixth Form College.

"We see the effects of savage cuts every day," she told Socialist Worker.

"We have bigger class sizes, higher workloads, redundancies, cuts to courses and less support for students with special educational needs. We've also had a pay cut in real terms and people are angry about all of it."

Duncan Blackie is an NEU rep at Longley Park Sixth Form in Sheffield.

"In my college there are no modern languages courses," he told Socialist Worker.

Workers ready for strikes to sweep 74 universities

WORKERS AT scores of universities are set to strike for two days from Thursday of next week—kicking off some 14 days of walkouts.

It will be the first national strike under the Boris Johnson government. Everyone needs to build solidarity with the fightback.

UCU union members at 74 institutions are fighting over pay, pensions, workloads, casual contracts and pay inequality.

Carlo Morelli is a UCU rep at Dundee university and a member

BACK STORY

Workers in sixth form colleges are in dispute over pay and funding cuts

- This week will see their fourth strike in the dispute
- The NEU union said there's a funding shortfall of £700 million
- Lack of resources hits students' education
- Workers are resisting pay cuts, higher workloads, course cuts and less support for students

"There are no performing arts courses.

"And one thing that's really starting to annoy people is that it's becoming more obvious that we are very differently paid to school teachers."

Trevor, an NEU member at Newham Sixth Form College, said the cost of living in London "means this job isn't sustainable, especially for

single people".

The walkouts will hit over a third of all sixth form colleges across England.

And future strikes could be bigger.

The NEU is conducting indicative ballots for strikes in all sixth form colleges, before current ballots expire.

Results so far show strong support for more action.

"We got an overwhelming vote of 88 percent for strikes on a 75 percent turnout," said Duncan. "It was good timing as it got everyone in the right place for this week's strikes."

Jean added, "We got a strong vote for strikes and beat the Tories' 50 percent turnout threshold. We will fight on and we are determined to win."

Further

The union has called further strike dates on 27 February and 10 March, the day before a Tory budget. It is set to follow the indicative ballots with formal ballots after half term.

Duncan argued, "We need action as soon after the ballot result as possible.

"The harder we fight, the more likely we are to get a decent deal."

The threat of strikes last year pushed the government to pledge an extra £400 million for sixth form colleges.

But as joint NEU general secretary Kevin Courtney told strikers at a rally in October, "We have started to move them, but £400 million is nothing like enough."

Jean argued, "I would encourage parents and other trade unionists to join our lobby of parliament on 27 February.

"And other union members in schools can show their support for us by sending messages of solidarity and joining our picket lines."

Send messages of solidarity to strikers—email Jean at jean.evanson@neu.org.uk

Foreign Office



PICTURES: GUY SMALLMAN

'We want government to talk to us'

"WE NEED respect," says Beatriz—not her real name—a cleaner at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. "The way they treat people, the cleaners, it's not good."

Beatriz is one of the outsourced Foreign Office workers on strike in Whitehall in a long-running battle over wages and conditions.

After several shorter strikes against their employer Interserve, the cleaners, porters and maintenance workers, began a month-long walkout last week.

Outsourcer Interserve has launched a steady assault that drove their workers to work

harder for less pay.

For cleaners, that meant having their overtime scrapped—something they relied on.

"Now they want us to cover large areas in a short time," Beatriz told Socialist Worker. This is not possible. "Now we're all very stressed."

Changes

Gary, a maintenance worker, said there had been big changes since he started working at the Foreign Office 32 years ago.

"It's 100 miles an hour," he said. "It used to be like a family and everyone worked for each other."

"Now you just have to get your head down." The

strikers are demanding that Interserve recognises their PCS union, and that they get the same conditions as other civil service workers.

But they also want the government—and foreign secretary Dominic Raab—to take responsibility too.

"We want Raab to come down here and talk to us," said cleaner Anne, another striker who didn't want to give her name.

"I'll give him a piece of my mind."

"When he comes in, his office is clean. If I was his daughter or his sister, would he allow us to stay out here in the cold?"

"I'll get him one day."

Read a longer version of this article at bit.ly/FCO2691



On the picket line in December

of the union's national executive committee.

"Long gone are the days when universities were a place of well paid workers with autonomy >>>turn to page 19